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7 September 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Bunker's 19th Weekly (Saigon 5060, 6 September 67)

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1. As might be expected, the bulk of Ambassador Bunker's report deals mainly with the elections, the results thereof, the excellent manner in which the elections were conducted, and the favorable impressions made on the team of observers and the experts who accompanied them. Almost all of this has been previously and thoroughly reported by the Station, State, and the press. Ambassador Bunker appears particularly pleased with the favorable observations of the Australian and New Zealand ambassadors toward the elections and the attitude of U.S. Congressman Wolff who arrived as a skeptic and left with words of praise.

2. Of more importance in the report are paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12, in which Ambassador Bunker discusses the new problems facing the government and recounts his post-election meeting with THIEU. I believe you may find it useful to read these paragraphs directly.

3. The Ambassador continues on the details of the election, percentages, etc., all previously reported, and then devotes some space to the surprise showing of Truong Dinh DZU (and the fact that DZU latched onto the "peace" issue only late in the campaign when he sensed the receptivity of his audiences) and a run down on the showing made by the other major candidates. Bunker feels the press conference to be held on 7 September (Saigon time) will be an indicator of how far the other defeated candidates are prepared to support DZU in denouncing the elections and the THIEU-KY victory.

4. You may want to look at paragraphs 35, 36 and 37, in which Bunker discusses the National Liberation Front's revision of its political program. Bunker feels this revision, the first change in six and one-half years, is particularly significant because of its tie-in to Hanoi's four points for peace.'

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5. The remainder of the political section of the Ambassador's report enlarges on the problems facing the THIEU-KY government and the fact that the Ambassador plans to counsel THIEU to be generous to the defeated civilian candidates by including some of them in the new government and to take no legal or other action against DZU. (We also face another national election on 22 October for the Lower House; 1500 candidates are expected to contest the 137 seats.)

6. The Ambassador concludes by saying "while the elections have taken us a considerable step further down the road, there are still plenty of potholes ahead."

[redacted]

Vietnamese Affairs Staff

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Attachment:
State Cable